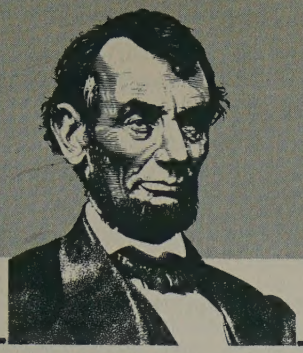

Lincoln Lore

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TOM THUMB VISITS THE WHITE HOUSE

One of the most unusual social functions ever held in the White House was staged during the Lincoln administration in honor of Tom Thumb (Charles S. Stratton) and his wife Lavinia. This reception was promoted by Phineas T. Barnum, a loyal Republican and a great showman, who solicited an audience for his then most famous human oddities. Tom Thumb, it will be recalled, became the world's best known Lilliputian through the showmanship and press-agentry of Barnum. He was well known both in this country and Europe, having appeared at the courts of England, France and Belgium. In 1842, when first exhibited, Tom Thumb was not more than two feet high and weighed less than sixteen pounds, but he became taller and heavier in later life.

The date of the White House reception was February 13, 1863. Grace Greenwood, a correspondent for *The National Era, The Independent* and *The Little Pilgrim* provided the fullest newspaper coverage of the reception. The above mentioned date is confirmed through the Virginia Woodbury Fox diary of the Blair Papers in the Library of Congress. Virginia Woodbury married Gustavus Fox (assistant Secretary of the Navy) and she recorded under February 13, 1863 that; "Mrs. Lincoln entertained General Tom Thumb, whose name is Charles S. Stratton, and his wife, who is wearing a full bridal costume and pretty diamonds. About fifty guests were introduced to the couple. Champagne and cake were served. When the president greets Tom Thumb, "Mrs. Fox wrote: 'The smallest and greatest man (men) in the nation met.' "

Tom Thumb married Lavinia Warren on February 10, 1863. According to contemporary accounts; "Tom Thumb, twenty-four years old, weighing twenty-one pounds, had 'popped the question' to Miss Lavinia Warren, twenty years old, weighing twenty-nine pounds, each about 32 inches high." Miss Warren loved the "General" (a title bestowed by Barnum, who managed the dwarf from 1838 until Stratton's death in 1883) but she feared her mother would object to his mustache. The suitor replied that, "I will cut that off and my ears also if that will induce her to give affirmative to my question." Apparently no such drastic action was taken because the wedding picture of the diminutive couple reveals the General wearing a thin line mustache.

The wedding was held at Grace Church in New York City with "the social elite" in attendance. Major General Ambrose E. Burnside was present and was said facetiously to have represented The Army of the Potomac. The best man and bridesmaid were midgets and they escorted the bride and groom up an especially constructed stairway of six steps to a platform before the chancel where three clergymen performed the nuptual rites. The benediction was given by the Reverend Dr. Taylor, the Rector of Grace Church. "Whereupon," according to one newspaper, "The General saluted his wife with an honest kiss, the last of nearly three million pressed in public upon the lips of his lady admirers."

A wedding reception was held at the Metropolitan Hotel, where some two thousand boxes of wedding cake were distributed to guests, who also had an opportunity to view the gifts. The wedding gifts were numerous, some from the Vanderbilts, Belmonts, Bennets, Barnum and Mrs. Abraham Lincoln. Many gifts in miniature were sent by manufacturers. The first lady's gift was "a gorgeous set of Chinese fire screens, richly inlaid with gold, silver, and pearl." The most unusual gift was an international gown for Mrs. Stratton designed and made by Madame Demorest, No. 473 Broadway. Ordered by Barnum, the gown was made "without regard to style or cost." A newspaper reporter described the gown as being, "a thin silk changing from pale amber to a silvery white, its breadths connected at each seam by marabou feathers and lace, the skirt had national emblems traced in its folds of white satin, in front Growing Corn for America,

From the Meserve Collection
Courtesy of Lincoln Memorial University

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Thumb (Charles S. Stratton)
A Mathew B. Brady photograph of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Thumb dressed in their wedding clothes.

on the right a Rose for England, on the left a Laurel for France, on the other breadths an Acorn in oak leaves for Germany, a Shamrock for Ireland, the Thistle for Scotland, and a Vine with Cluster of Grapes for Italy." This was the dress Barnum planned for Lavinia to wear before the royalty and nobility of Europe.

The groom's gifts to the bride were a necklace, brooch, bracelets, earrings, and hairpins of eighteen-carat gold set with diamonds. Perhaps these were the "pretty diamonds" Mrs. Fox saw at the White House reception.

After spectacular receptions in Philadelphia and Baltimore the newlyweds arrived in Washington, D. C., the forenoon of February 13th. They immediately secured passes from the Secretary of War to visit Benjamin Warren, the brother of the bride, stationed at Arlington Heights. He was a soldier in the Fortieth Massachusetts regiment. In a conversation on the subject of the war Mrs. Stratton "expressed the warmest devotion for the cause of the Union, and as being perfectly willing for her brother to remain in the service, and, if necessary, for her husband to volunteer." This statement was perhaps promoted by Barnum's press agent.

There is every reason to believe that considerable pressure was exerted by Barnum to have the famous midgets entertained in the White House. Mrs. Lincoln according to Elizabeth Keckley (author of *Behind the Scenes or Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years In The White House, 1868),* was influenced by some of her friends who "made her believe that it was the duty" of the first lady to show some attention to the remarkable dwarfs. The argument advanced was that "Tom Thumb had been caressed by Royalty in the Old World, and why should not the wife of the president of his native country smile upon him also?"

Thereupon Mrs. Lincoln arranged a hasty reception and cards of invitation to share a novel entertainment were issued to a limited number of friends. According to the *Daily Morning Chronicle,* Washington, D. C., February 14, 1863, the notables present, in addition to the President and Mrs. Lincoln, "were the General and his lady . . . Secretaries Chase, Stanton, Welles, Blair, and Usher, and Senator Wilson, Generals Butler and Clay, Hon. J. J. Crittenden, and many other gentlemen of distinction, nearly all of whom were accompanied by their families." Other guests were Kate Chase, "the prettiest Kate in all Christendom" the Gustavus Vasa Foxes, John Hay and John Nicolay, the latter two young men the private secretaries to the president. In fact, John Nicolay wrote his fiancee, Therena Bates, on February 15, 1863 that "on Friday night" he went "to a little reception given by Mrs. Lincoln to Tom Thumb and his bride."

According to Elizabeth Keckley, Robert Lincoln refused his mother's invitation to be present. Their conversation as given in *Behind the Scenes* follows:

"You are at leisure this afternoon, are you not Robert?"

"Yes mother."

"Of course, then, you will dress and come down-stairs."

"No, mother, I do not propose to assist in entertaining Tom Thumb. My notions of duty, perhaps are somewhat different from yours."

Mrs. Keckley stated that "Robert had a lofty soul, and he could not stoop to all of the follies and absurdities of the ephemeral current of fashionable life."

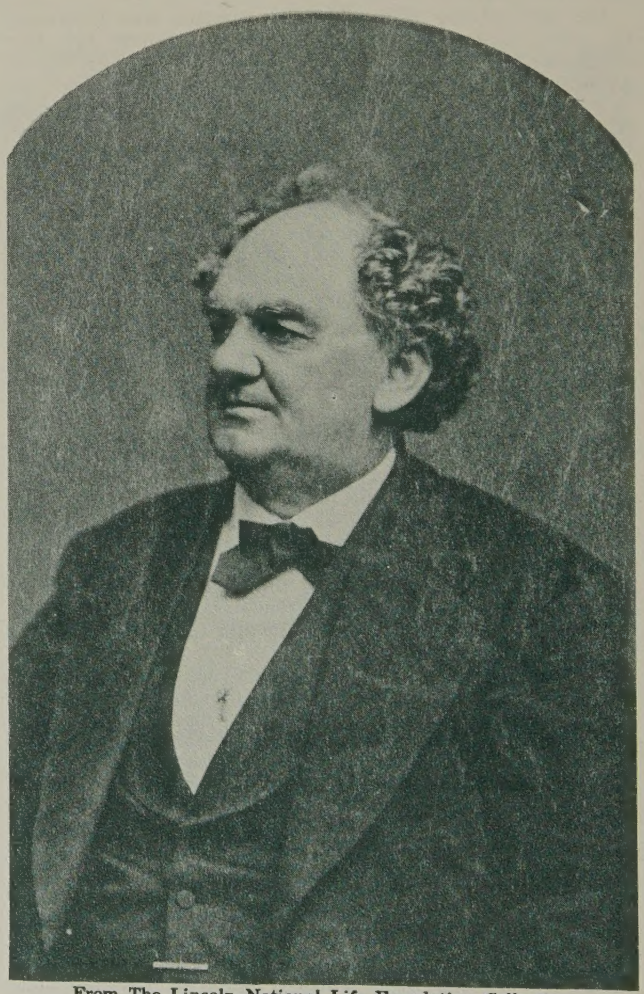
The midget couple upon entering the White House were announced in loud tones and the bridegroom, taking the arm of the bride, advanced in "pigeon-like statliness" almost to the feet of the president. Their arrival in the Green Room was at eight o'clock. The president appeared in somber black with white kid gloves. Miss Greenwood reported that Mrs. Lincoln wore "a low-necked gown of rich pink silk, with flounces climbing high up over a hoop-skirt trellis, and pink roses in her hair." The pigmy general was dressed in a gaudy wedding suit and his wife wore a "wedding dress of white satin and point lace with orange blossoms and pearls. The train of her dress extended about two yards behind her."

The introduction between America's tallest president and the world's best known Lilliputian proceeded with the profoundest respect. The tall host was required to bend and stoop in order to shake the hands of the General and his wife, yet he did not make them feel that they were at his feet. He regarded them as important, sensible people who were widely traveled and who knew something of the world. "With profound respect," according to Grace Greenwood, "they looked up, up to his kindly face. It was pleasant to see their tall host bend, and bend, to take their little hands in his great palm, holding Madame's with special chariness, as though it were a robin's egg, and he were afraid of breaking it. He made them feel from the first as though he regarded them as real folks . . ."

The presentation of the couple to Mrs. Lincoln was very courteously done, and in his introduction the president did not use the slightest touch of exaggeration for the amusement of the onlookers, many of whom were present to see a farce of Washington society.

As the crowd became quite large for the Green Room, the entire party, at Mrs. Lincoln's suggestion, removed to the East Room of the building which was more commodious. All the guests were in a genial mood that evening, despite the fact that some may have doubtless thought the occasion foolish and unsuited to the critical times. Mrs. Fox's diary, under the date of February 14, 1863, gives a little insight into the theme of one conversation that evening. Mrs. Fox wrote that Mrs. Montgomery Blair (one of the Woodbury sisters) heard Mrs. Lincoln say to Mrs. Tom Thumb; "we small people depend very much on our brains."

President Lincoln, according to the *Chronicle* reporter, "in the course of the evening, remarked to General Thumb that he had thrown him completely in the shade, that he (the General) was now the great center of attraction."



From The Lincoln National Life Foundation Collection

Phineas Taylor Barnum

The great showman who coined the phrase that "a sucker was born every minute."

Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper (March 7, 1863) carried a Delaware news item to the effect that Mr. Lincoln asked: "Well, General, what is your opinion of the war, as a military man? My opinion is that my friend Barnum would settle the whole affair in a month!"

When refreshments were being served, Tad, the president's young son was very gracious in aiding the diminutive couple to take their ice and cake off a chair. Mr. Lincoln from his expression, seemed amused at Tad's reaction to a gentleman and lady, grown up and married, yet lacking even his boyish height. "Later," according to Grace Greenwood, "while the bride and groom were taking a quiet promenade by themselves up and down the big drawing-room, I noticed the president gazing after them with a smile of quaint humor; but, in his sorrow-shadowed eyes, there was something more than amusement—a gentle sympathy in the apparent happiness and goodfellowship of this curious wedded pair—come to him out of fairyland."

The Strattons remained at the White House until half past nine o'clock. According to the *Daily Morning Chronicle* (Feb. 14, 1860) "they were compelled to decline the pressing invitations of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln to remain longer, by reason of a private reception of his own, to which the General had invited the members of the press and a few select friends." This was a busy night socially in Washington as a reception was also held at the home of the Speaker of the House, Galusha Grow, while a small group gathered at Mrs. Bacon's and a large party was given by the Russian Minister. John Nicolay attened all four. Perhaps many of the White House guests also attended other parties that evening.

Aside from the news reports the White House reception for Tom Thumb occasioned little comment. However, a cartoon entitled "The Coming Men" published in the February 28, 1863 issue of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* appears to be a timely sketch of the reception, but it relates in no way to the event, the subject being an attack on the military and naval commanders of the Civil War. This cartoon shows P. T. Barnum presenting General Thumb and Commodore Nutt, also a midget, to the president. The dialogue of the cartoon is as follows:

The Great Showman: "Mr. Lincoln, since your military and naval heroes do not seem to get on, try mine."

Lincoln: "Well, I will do it to oblige you, friend Phineas, but I think mine are the smallest."

The reception for Tom Thumb and his wife at the White House will truly remain one of the most unusual affairs ever held in the nation's capital. This event can also be credited as another great publicity achievement of Phineas T. Barnum, who always claimed to have "the greatest show on earth."

Contemporary Newspaper Accounts Following the Death of Lincoln

Editor's Note: A careful reading of the newspapers immediately following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln reveals many little known topics of fact and fiction. Undoubtedly some of these short articles were used as filler. Only occasionally do they yield information of any importance. Nevertheless they reflect the hysteria that followed the great calamity of 1865.

A FRIEND OF THE ASSASSINS TARRED AND FEATHERED AT SWAMPSCOTT

"On the reception of the news this morning (Lincoln's assassination) one George Stone of Swampscott said in public it was the best news we had received for four years, and gave three cheers. The citizens and soldiers of Swampscott took him by force, tarred and feathered him, dragged him through the town in a boat, compelling him to hold the American flag over his head, and upon promising to buy an American flag and keep it up during the mourning for the president at half mast he was then set at liberty."

Boston *Daily Journal*
April 15, 1865

ERRONEOUS CONJECTURE

"The Funeral of the President: It is expected, though nothing has been decided upon, that the funeral of the late president Lincoln will take place on or about Thursday next. It is supposed that his remains will be temporarily deposited in the Congressional cemetery."

Springfield (Ill.) *Daily Republican*
Extra. April 15, 1865.

A CURIOUS INCIDENT

"To the Editors of the *Evening Post:*

"On Wednesday night preceding the president's assassination, a little deaf and dumb girl in our institution got up in her sleep, went to a classmate, and after rousing her, spelt with the manual alphabet, 'Lincoln is shot.' In the morning the somnambulist knew nothing of the circumstance till informed of it by her friend in the presence of others.

"The incident would probably never have been recalled but for the sad emphasis which after events gave it.

"It now seems one of those cases of prescience which so often arises to puzzle mental philosophers.

"Institution for Deaf and Dumb, April 18"

The Evening Post, New York, N. Y.
April 21, 1865.

A NEW PROOF OF THE PREMEDITATION OF THE MURDER

From the *Cincinnati Gazette, April 20*

"One of the most remarkable circumstances connected with the assassination is that all the private boxes in the theatre had been engaged by unknown parties on the morning of Friday. They were unoccupied during the night, so that when Booth jumped on the stage after the commission of the act he did not fear arrest from any parties who might have occupied them. This is but another, and one of the strongest evidences going to show the premeditation of the murder. The question now arises, who rented the boxes, and did it not naturally arouse suspision on the part of somebody connected with the theatre to know that all the boxes were rented and yet not occupied? Events will soon determine these mysteries."

New York Daily Tribune,
April 24, 1865

THE REPORTED SEIZURE OF PHOTOGRAPHS

"The reported seizure of the photographs taken by Gurney & Son, the photographers on Broadway, during the lying in state of the remains of President Lincoln at the City Hall, is entirely without foundation, the rumor being based on the fact that the Secretary of War, on hearing that Gurney had taken a series of pictures of the catafalque and the lineaments of Mr. Lincoln, as he lay in state, together with other accessories of the funeral, telegraphed to Gurney, at the request of Mrs. Lincoln, to destroy the presentiment of Mr. Lincoln's face, the features being in a distorted condition, which request was immediately complied with by Gurney & Son on receipt of the telegram from the Secretary of War."

The World, New York, N. Y.
Saturday, April 29, 1865

A NATIONAL MONUMENT TO ABRAHAM LINCOLN

How shall the people of the United States testify their admiration, sorrow and honest feelings? A good President who serves out his term with honor and retires, is certain of the esteem and gratitude of his fellow-citizens during life and of their respect to his family after death.

But the sudden taking off of Abraham Lincoln requires a different testimonial. We therefore suggest that subscriptions be taken up in every city and town by the Mayor or chief officer, for a national monument to Abraham Lincoln, and a nation's gift to his family.

This would be a noble tribute, shall it not be commenced at once?

The Philadelphia Inquirer
Monday, April 17, 1865

CUMULATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY—1959-1960

Selections approved by a Bibliography Committee consisting of the following members; Arnold Gates, 289 New Hyde Park Road, Garden City, N. Y.; Carl Haverlin, 2 Masterson Road, Bronxville, N. Y.; E. B. Long, 708 North Kenilworth Ave., Oak Park, Ill.; Richard F. Lufkin, 45 Milk Street Boston, 9 Mass.; Wayne C. Temple, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tenn.; Ralph G. Newman, 18 East Chestnut Street, Chicago 11, Ill.; William H. Townsend, 310 First National Bank Bldg., Lexington 3, Ky.; and Clyde C. Walton, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Ill.

New items available for consideration may be sent to the above addresses or to the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

1959

—INDIAN—GUJERATI—

UNITED STATES INFORMATION SERVICE 1959-173

(Translation): Abraham Lincoln/1809-1865. 1959.

Pamphlet, paper, 7" x 9¼", (65) pp. Illustrated in color. Juvenile. Printed in Gujerati-Indian language.

—SPANISH—

ANGLE, PAUL M. 1959-174

Pertenece a la Historia/por Paul M. Angle/(Translation): He Belongs to History/(sketch of covered wagon).

Pamphlet, paper, 8½" x 11", 28 pp., illus. Published del Servicio Informativo y Cultural da Los Estados Unidos. Printed in Buenos Aires in the Spanish language.

McNEER, MAY 1959-175

Abraham Lincoln/May McNeer/Illustraciones: Lind Ward/Coleccion Juvenil Illustrada/Editorial Agora/Tilulo de la obra en inglas: America's Abraham Lincoln/Traduccion: Mario H. Calichio.

Book, flexible boards, 7" x 9½", 120 pp., illus. First edition, July 1959. Printed in Argentina in the Spanish language.

MONAGHAN, JAY 1959-176

Abraham Lincoln/(1809-1865)/Por James (Jay) Monaghan.

Pamphlet, paper, 3" x 4½", 12 pp., fr. Servico de Informacion de los Estados Unidos. Printed in the Spanish language.

UNITED STATES INFORMATION SERVICE 1959-177

Lincoln/(sketch of Lincoln head by Daniel Nunez)/"Como yo no Quiero Ser Esclavo, Tampoco Quiero Ser Amo"/(Translation): "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master"/(Cover title).

Pamphlet, paper, 6" x 9", 48 pp., illus. Servicio De Informacion De Los Estados Unidos de America. Printed in the Spanish language.

UNITED STATES INFORMATION SERVICE 1959-178

1809/(sketch of Lincoln)/1959/Lincoln, Emancipador y Estadista/(Translation): Lincoln, Emancipator and Statesman)/(Cover title).

Pamphlet, paper, 7½" x 5¼", (12) pp., illus. Servicio de Informacion de los Estados Unidos, Habana, Cuba. Printed in the Spanish language.

UNITED STATES INFORMATION SERVICE 1959-179

Lincoln/(head of Lincoln)/En su 150 Aniversario/(Translation): Lincoln on his 150th Anniversary.

Pamphlet, paper, 8½" x 11", 22 pp., illus. Servicio de Informacion de los Estados Unidos de America. Printed in the Spanish language.

Editor's Note: During the remainder of the year (1960) the **Lincoln Lore** Cumulative Bibliography will carry many additional 1959 Lincoln titles as the publications are acquired and compiled. Again it is necessary to state that United States Information Service items are not available for distribution in the United States and requests for publications listed are not obtainable in Washington, D. C. or post abroad.

1960

CANBY, COURTLANDT 1960-01

Lincoln/and the/Civil War/A Profile and a History/Edited by/Courtlandt Canby/George Braziller, Inc./New York/1960.

Book, cloth, 6" x 8½", 416 pp., price $5.00.
See 1958-66 for pocket-book edition.

COWLEY, W. BURTON 1960-02

Begin the/Lincoln Tour/in/Elizabethtown, Ky./(sketch of Lincoln)/"My earliest recollection"/is of Hardin County/A. Lincoln/(Cover title).

Folder, paper, 5½" x 8½", (4) pp. Compiled by W. Burton Cowley, Chairman of the Surrounding Attractions—Committee Elizabethtown-Hardin County Chamber of Commerce.

DAUBER & PINE BOOKSHOPS 1960-03

February, 1960/Catalogue No. 569/(device)/Dauber & Pine Bookshops/Incorporated/66 Fifth Avenue/New York 11, N. Y./Near 12th Street/. . ./. . ./"Honest Abe"/The Life & Times of Abraham Lincoln/Interesting Collection/(Cover title).

Pamphlet, paper, 7" x 9¾", 28 pp.

DeWITT, J. DOYLE 1960-04

Lincoln/in/Hartford/by J. Doyle DeWitt/Member of the Connecticut/Civil War Centennial Commission/Privately printed in support of the activities of/the Connecticut Civil War Centennial Commission.

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 6¼" x 9½", 15 pp., fr., illus.

FREEMAN, ANDREW A. 1960-05

Andrew A. Freeman/Abraham Lincoln Goes to New York/Coward-McCann, Inc./(device)/New York.

Book, cloth, 5½" x 8¼", 160 pp., illus., price $3.95.

HANSER, RICHARD & HYATT, DONALD B. 1960-06

. . ./. . ./Meet/Mr./Lincoln/By Richard Hanser and Donald B. Hyatt.

Book, cloth, 8½" x 11¼", 131 pp., illus., price $5.00. Created from original Project Twenty television program first presented by the National Broadcasting Company on February 11, 1959. Published by Golden Press, Inc., Rockefeller Center, New York 20, New York.

HANSER, RICHARD & HYATT, DONALD B. 1960-07

. . ./. . ./Meet/Mr./Lincoln/By Richard Hanser and Donald B. Hyatt.

Book, flexible boards, 8¼" x 11", 131 pp., illus., price $1.50.

KOMROFF, MANUEL 1960-08

Abraham Lincoln/by Manuel Komroff/Illustrated by Charles Beck/G. P. Putnam's Sons/New York.

Book, cloth, 5½" x 8¼", 123 pp., illus., juvenile, price $2.50.

LAMBERSON, TOM 1960-09

A/Directory of Collectors/of/Books, Autographs, Prints/and others/Historical Material/Relating to Abraham Lincoln/1960 Edition/$2.00/Published by Tom Lamberson—1960/Printed in Richmond, Ind./Igelman Printing/by Express Permission of Copyright Owner.

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 4" x 6", 39 pp.

LINCOLN SESQUICENTENNIAL ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA 1960-10

Lincoln / Sesquicentennial / Association of / California / Commemorative/Dinner/Faculty Center/University of California/at Los Angeles/February 8/1960.

Pamphlet, paper, 8½" x 13¼", (4) pp. Limited to 300 copies. Printed at the Plantin Press. Contains illustration from the Lincoln Collection of Justin G. Turner.

NEWELL, HELEN M. & POTTER, NANCY A. 1960-11

Reflections/While Standing Before/The Lincoln Memorial/Prize/Winning Essays/by Helen M. Newell/and/by Nancy A. Potter/Conducted by/Broadcast Music, Inc./in cooperation with/The American Association for State and Local History.

Pamphlet, paper, 6" x 9¼", 15 pp.

NORMAN, GERTRUDE 1960-12

A Man/Named/Lincoln/By Gertrude Norman/Illustrated by Joseph Cellini/G. P. Putnam's Sons/New York.

Brochure, cloth, 6¾" x 8¾", (34) pp., illus., juvenile. Price $2.00.

TEMPLE, WAYNE C. 1960-13

Mrs. Mary Edwards Brown/Tells Story of/Lincoln's Wedding/Edited by/Wayne C. Temple, Ph.D./Director/Department of Lincolniana/Lincoln Memorial University/Limited edition published for the members of the National Lincoln-Civil War Council/Lincoln Memorial University Press/Harrogate, Tennessee/1960.

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 6" x 8¾", 8 pp.

TURNER, JUSTIN G. 1960-14

A Note on/Solomon Nunes Carvalho/and his Portrait of/Abraham Lincoln/by Justin G. Turner/Los Angeles/The Plantin Press/1960.

Pamphlet, paper, 5½" x 7¾", 11 pp., fr., limited to 350 copies.